

Utah State Veterans Memorial Park Board Meeting

December 05, 2014 2:00 pm

Members present:

Gary Harter
Sanford Rosenthal
Paula Stephenson
Lester Peterson

Members excused:

Tony Galvez

Staff:

Dennis McFall
Arnold Warner
Kelli Silcox

Business:

Welcome and Introduction: Dennis welcomed everyone, excused Tony Galvez who called and reported a work issue had arisen. Dennis turned the time over to Gary Harter.

Gary welcomed everyone and provided a brief overview of Board duties and responsibilities. It was clarified this is an Advisory Board, not a Policy Board, therefore the Board makes recommendations to the Executive Director of the Department of Veterans and Military Affairs. Gary asked the members to introduce themselves and give a short bio.

Review and Approval of fees – Dennis indicated one of the responsibilities of the Board is to recommend for or against the fees charged by the Cemetery for services. He explained that some of the fees are mandatory in the sense that the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) determines a fee for veterans' burials and pays this to the state. We are required to report this to the legislature during our budget process and they approve or disapprove. We will be paid the fee regardless of approval because that is NCA policy.

Dennis reported that we are attempting to locate the original Policy and Procedure Manual for the cemetery. Arnold Warner reports that it cannot be located and expressed his thoughts that perhaps it was removed when the former Sexton left. Dennis distributed a copy of the Floral Policy which needs to be updated, and indicated that policies covering all aspects of the operation will be rewritten and presented to the Board for discussion and approval at a future meeting. He will continue to search in the archives for the original policy manual. Of significance is the policy covering Saturday burials. Arnold reported the cost is a factor, as well as getting employees to give up their Saturday. Arnold recommended a fee increase for Saturday burials to offset the additional cost and to perhaps discourage these. There will be instances where it is necessary due to travel etc. for families and the staff will continue to honor these requests.

Sanford Rosenthal moved to increase the Saturday burial fee to \$1000 and the vase cost fee from \$60 to \$65, second by Lester Peterson. Motion passed unanimously. Dennis stated that all fees have been submitted to the Office of Planning and Budget for this year and any further

change will be difficult and may not be accepted. Nonetheless he will make inquiry, and if not acceptable for this year will be included next year.

The Board discussed the Wall of Honor, costs involved, and expansion possibilities. Sanford Rosenthal will work with Arnold to develop a plan to present at a future meeting. Arnold has developed a new form that donors can use to provide information for the Wall. He has asked Ruby Tile to provide an estimate of expansion costs and to review location sites. It was felt by the Board that it would be best to expand on the same wall and construct a cover (overhang.)

Dennis indicated that burials are exceeding previous forecasts and the cemetery will likely require additional space sooner than original planned. We are doing nearly twice as many burials as was projected several years ago, therefore we may be looking at a need within the next 10-12 years as opposed to the original 20 year estimate. Land to the north of the cemetery may be available and initial discussions are on hold pending the resolution of what appears to be a verbal commitment to sell a portion of the land to a nearby neighbor who currently runs horses on the property. Dennis will report more on this as decisions are reached with the property owner. He then asked Arnold to discuss current burial numbers and projections.

A monthly record of burials was provided by Arnold. Burials from July through November, 2014 were listed and show a low of 29 (October) to a high in August of 57. The average is 38 per month. There are 2009 casket sites available and 4740 cremains sites available. It is difficult to project use but if we continue to increase at the current pace we expect approximately 500 burials per year. The casket sites are the more critical of the two. Cremains sites appear to be in good supply but if the majority are casket sites we will be in critical need inside of ten years, possibly sooner. Sanford Rosenthal asked what effect a new planned Veterans Cemetery in southern Utah might have on our cemetery here. While it is not clear, Arnold stated that currently we are the only Veterans Cemetery and therefore there will likely be some effect since we accept burials from across the entire state at the present time.

In response to a question regarding flags, Arnold stated that flags are placed on every grave site on Memorial Day and Veterans Day.

Dennis and Arnold gave a brief report on the grants, expansion of the cemetery and a few of the issues that arose during this time. New water lines were run, new buildings constructed, grave sites realigned and marked and grounds cleaned. Operating costs have increased as a direct result, primarily heating costs, (propane,) and we are examining additional ways to save on this expenditure. There is also a new area for monuments, memorials and a scatter garden. Grants totaled \$4.5 million and all renovations were done with federal money, no state dollars. Facilities are available here for memorial and other appropriately related events and just need to be cleared with Arnold or Kelli.

Need for Chairman: Dennis stated the Board needs to elect a Chair. Paula Stephenson nominated Sanford Rosenthal, second by Lester Peterson. Sanford was unanimously elected to serve as Chairman.

The next meeting is tentatively set for March 27, 2015 at the Cemetery. Most meetings will be held on site at the cemetery so the Board can see the grounds, etc. and every effort will be made to accommodate schedules. We have some members who travel some distance as well, and also have employment and other obligations to consider for holding meetings.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 3:35 pm.